



For Immediate Release:

May 14, 2010

Pertussis Cases Increasing in LA County

Whooping cough has caused the deaths of two infants already this year

LOS ANGELES – Because of an increasing number of whooping cough (pertussis) cases in Los Angeles County over the past few weeks, the Department of Public Health is reminding residents to protect themselves and their loved ones from this highly contagious disease.

This year, 73 possible cases have been reported in Los Angeles County, 19 of which have been confirmed by laboratory testing so far. With this level of activity, the county could exceed last year's total of 155 reported cases.

“In particular, we’re very concerned that two infants have already died this year due to pertussis,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Typically, Los Angeles County has one or no deaths due to pertussis each year.”

Pertussis is vaccine-preventable disease spread by the coughing of an infected individual. Typical symptoms in young children include intense coughing accompanied by a whooping sound, and post-cough vomiting. Complications can include pneumonia and seizures. Among older children and adults, the primary symptom may be a cough that often lasts for several weeks or longer. If you suspect that you or a loved one may have pertussis, contact your doctor right away.

“Infants under one year of age are at highest risk for developing severe complications, and tragically are usually infected by a family member or caretaker,” said Dr. Fielding. “That is why we recommend that people with a cough illness of any kind avoid contact with infants. And of course, anyone who has frequent contact with an infant should be doubly sure that their vaccinations are up-to-date.”

Children should receive three primary vaccinations containing the pertussis vaccine and two boosters by age four to six, followed by a TDaP booster (which protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) during their preteen years. Any teen or adult who has not received a TDaP booster yet should do so, particularly if they live in a household with an infant.

Los Angeles County residents are encouraged to contact their regular healthcare provider to arrange for recommended vaccinations. Those who do not have a regular healthcare provider or insurance coverage for vaccines may dial 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip for referrals to providers and community sites offering immunizations free or at a reduced-charge.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community



Public Health News

partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

###